

Winter Swimming Understanding

Swimming session

To be followed from water temperatures below 11°C.

Drop-ins are permitted in allocated time slots; sessions will start every 30 minutes. All sessions will start with a guided acclimatisation to ensure everyone is calm and ready to continue with their swimming.

It can be difficult to specify a minimum temperature and maximum swimming time or distance. Time in the water will be shorter than in the summer, ensure that pre-swim preparation and post swimming warm up is done properly as it is key to your safety.

All swimmers are to complete the following.

- Winter swimming questionnaire
- The understanding of the physiological response to cold water swimming. To help them know what to expect
- Sign a winter swimming responsibility statement acknowledging their responsibilities and agreeing to follow all safety instructions and rules
- Undergo an induction, including information about what to expect when swimming, what kit to bring, how the session is managed, the swim course and safety arrangements
- Do not start to swim until your breathing and heart rate has slowed down and is controlled

Wetsuits or swimming costume

Wearing a wetsuit will not stop cold water shock, but it will help reduce the cooling rate by providing insulation. Swimming without a wetsuit is not fundamentally less safe but that just means that the acclimatisation process and swimming time will be adjusted accordingly.

Wearing a wetsuit is recommended for swimmers new to cold water swimming. Choose the right type of wetsuit that is well-fitted and is designed for swimming. Neoprene hats, gloves and boots will help keep extremities protected.

Tow floats are compulsory.

This does not cover competitive winter swimming, one off events or unsupervised swims. 18 years and over.

Physiological Response to cold water

It is important to understand the bodies response to cold water and additionally you should be aware of the high risks and problems associated with cold water once you have exited the water.

As you get colder you will probably experience mental confusion, slurred speech and poor movement coordination.

- **Cold water shock**: Bodies response to sudden cold.
 - Gasping could lead to drowning, hyperventilating

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure, due to the heart working harder to pump blood to the extremities and body to heat it up
- Hard to hold the breath
- Delay in physical response and ability to think clearly, causing panic
- **Mitigating risks**
 - Wear a wetsuit
 - Wading into the water slowly – never dive in
 - Immerse the whole body in the water, allowing time to acclimatise to the water temperature before swimming, during acclimatation the head should remain above water
- **Peripheral cooling**
 - Cooling of the extremities (hands & feet) bringing on stiffness, poor coordination, impaired motor skills and loss of muscle power
 - Impacts the ability to swim effectively and stay afloat, restricts ability to grab onto things or climb out
 - Excessive inhalation of water in rough conditions as co-ordination between strokes and breathing become difficult
- **Hypothermia**
 - The loss of body heat that is greater than what can be generated, causing deep tissue cooling
 - Core temperature drops below 35°C
 - Within 20-30 minutes depending on age, gender, body morphology, water temperature, water movement, fitness, health, fatigue, alcohol, insulation, surface area, exposed skin
 - Symptoms: constant shivering, tiredness, confusion, low energy, cold or pale skin, fast breathing, heart failure & respiratory
- **After drop**
 - Is the continuous cooling of the body after you have exited the water. Leading to further cooling of the deeper tissues. Max cooling period is up to 30 minutes post swim
- **Re-warming the right way is important**
 - Take shelter in a warm dry area
 - Remove all wet layers and dry off as quick as possible. Put on dry clothing (multiple thin layer) straight away including warm hat, gloves and thick socks
 - Sipping on a warm drink
 - Eat a sugary snack
 - Move around gradually to help generate heat (but don't if you are feeling overwhelmed)
- **Bear in mind:**
 - Bare skin should not be exposed to extreme heats as it is likely to develop chilblains.

- Re-warming should be gradual, as sudden exposure to heat will cause blood that is pooled in the core to rush to the extremities, dropping blood pressure which could lead to fainting
- Do not re-warm in a hot bath or shower. As this can create a false sense of warmth, warming the extremities but the core will still be cold. If in for too long the fainting can occur
- Use of a space foil blanket will not help as the body is not warm in order to trap more heat. A medi-blanket or dry towel will be more effective for warming
- Advice swimmers to not drive or cycle straight after coming out the water, until coordination and mental state is fully alert

I have read and understand the rules and swimming course at Bicester Open Water swimming lake, as well as understand the physiological response to cold water swimming and how to equip myself for cold water swimming.

Name:

Sign:

Date: